



THE PROPHETIC WITNESS

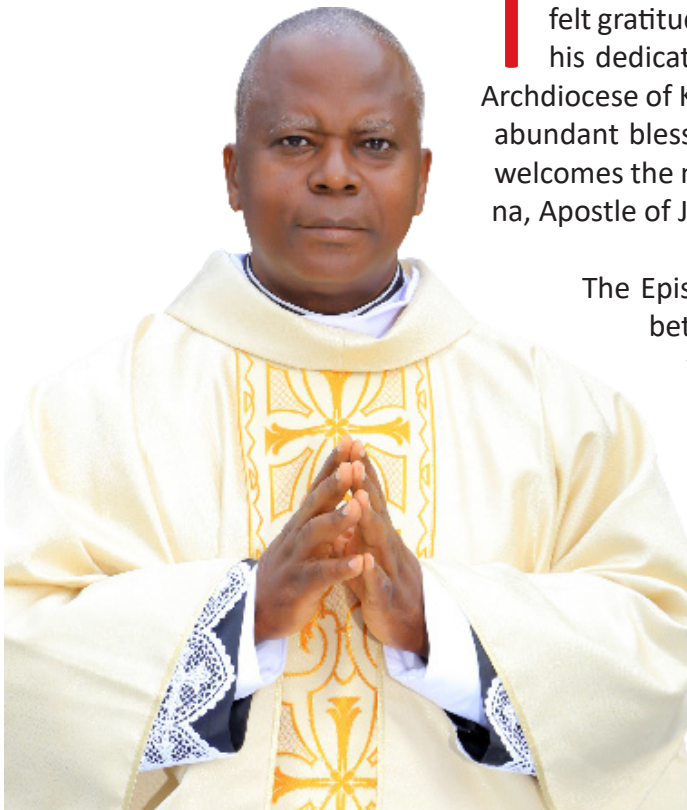
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Welcoming the New Episcopal Vicar for Religious in Kampala Archdiocese



The Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) expresses its heartfelt gratitude to Rev. Fr. Richard Nyombi, Missionary of Africa, for his dedicated service as the Episcopal Vicar for Religious in the Archdiocese of Kampala over the past six years. ARU wishes him God's abundant blessings as he embarks on his next ministry and warmly welcomes the newly appointed Episcopal Vicar Rev. Fr. Joseph Kyeyuna, Apostle of Jesus and former president of ARU.

The Episcopal Vicar for Religious serves as an important link between the Archbishop and the religious men and women serving within the Archdiocese, fostering collaboration, communication, and pastoral support.

In the same spirit, the Association extends its sincere appreciation to Sr. Immaculate Nakato, IMR, for her committed service as the Coordinator for Religious in the Archdiocese of Kampala for the past two years. We thank her for her dedication and warmly welcome the new Coordinator Sr. Noeline Nankya, of the Daughters of Mary (DM) Congregation.

Rev. Fr. Joseph Kyeyuna, Apostle of Jesus and former ARU president.

Fr. Richard Nnyombi, M'Afri and the out-going Episcopal Vicar for the Religious in Kampala Archdiocese is a senior member of the Missionaries of Africa and the first parish priest of St. John the Baptist Mapeera Nabulagala Catholic parish which was inaugurated in 2007.

Hilton Foundation Convening Spotlights Uganda Catholic Sisters' Efforts to Restore Hope to Women Living with Birth Injuries



In the photo above is the Hilton convening in Session which took place in Tanzania, Sr. Maria Goretti caught up with the session virtually due to the effect of Ebola in Uganda at the time of convening. Courtesy Photo.

*By Sr. Maria Goretti Kabakaali –
National Coordinator, (CRSHCIU)*

As it does every three years, the Hilton Foundation convened more than 130 Catholic sisters from 23 countries across Africa and other key delegates in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from 10–12 June 2026.

The gathering aimed to strengthen communities and foster collective impact under the theme, “Journeying Together in Solidarity and Hope: Strengthening Communities and Cultivating Shared Impact for the Common Good.”

Together, the participants shared experiences and explored collaborative solutions to some of society’s most pressing challenges.

Among the key issues highlighted was the silent suffering of women living with birth injuries, a challenge that continues to affect thousands across Africa despite advances in maternal healthcare.

Representing Uganda at the convening, the Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda (CRSHCIU) presented its ongoing efforts to identify, treat,

and rehabilitate women affected by childbirth-related injuries such as obstetric fistula, severe perineal tears, and pelvic organ prolapse.

“Every mother deserves to live with dignity and hope,” “For many women, childbirth brings joy. But for others, complications leave them physically injured, socially isolated, and emotionally broken. Our mission is to walk with these women and help them rebuild their lives.” said a participant at the convening.

The Initiative, supported through

partnerships with hospitals, health workers, religious congregations, and community structures, has become a vital source of support for vulnerable women who often suffer in silence due to stigma and lack of access to treatment.

Health experts note that obstetric fistula remains one of the most devastating childbirth injuries. The condition, often caused by prolonged obstructed labor, results in continuous leakage of urine or stool and can leave women facing rejection by spouses, exclusion from community life, and severe psychological distress.

However, doctors and other health care workers emphasize that these injuries are preventable and treatable medical conditions, not curses or punishments as some cultural misconceptions suggest.

The Catholic Religious Sisters

Health Care Initiative Uganda has responded to this issue by organizing medical outreach camps, community screening exercises, treatment referrals, counselling services, and rehabilitation programs that enable affected women to access care and reintegrate into society.

Beyond treatment, the Initiative focuses on restoring women's confidence and economic independence. Through community awareness campaigns and empowerment programs, survivors are encouraged to rebuild their livelihoods and reclaim their place within their families and communities.

Participants at the Tanzania convening praised the growing role of Catholic sisters in addressing healthcare gaps among vulnerable populations. They noted that their work extends beyond providing medical services to offering compassionate accompaniment that addresses the social

and emotional consequences of illness and exclusion.

The convening also reinforced the importance of partnerships in achieving sustainable impact. Faith-based organizations, governments, healthcare institutions, and development agencies were encouraged to strengthen collaboration to improve maternal health services and expand access to life-changing treatment for women living with birth injuries.

The Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda attributed the gathering for serving as both a platform for sharing achievements and a call to action.

Established in 2023, the Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda through Hilton funding has resolved thousands of maternal health across Uganda. The initiative calls upon partners, well-wishers, and communities to support its mission of restoring dignity and hope to women affected by birth injuries and other maternal health complications.



Hilton Convening in Session

Missionaries of Africa: The Story of Uganda's Evangelisation and the Uganda Martyrs



By Fr. Richard Nyombi, M.Afr

When Charles Lavigerie looked at Algeria in 1867, he saw more than a North African territory. He saw a gateway, a place from which the light of the Gospel would one day spread across the vast lands south of the Sahara. That dream would eventually reach Uganda and produce one of the most remarkable stories of faith in the history of Christianity: the story of the Ugandan Martyrs.

Charles Cardinal Lavigerie, Founder of the Missionaries of Africa

Born on 31 October 1825 in Bayonne, southern France, near the border with Spain, Lavigerie was the eldest of four children; three boys and one girl. He was ordained priest in Paris on the 2nd of June 1849 and served as professor of Church History in Sorbonne University in Paris; auditor to the Tribunal of the ROTA in the Vatican (1861-1863); bishop of Nancy in Northeastern France (1863-1867); Archbishop of Algiers (1867-1892).

He was created Cardinal in 1882 by Pope Leon XIII and two years later in November 1884 he was elected Archbishop of Carthage and Primate of Africa while still serving as Archbishop of Algiers. The same Pope entrusted him the mission to spearhead a major European anti-slavery campaign to eradicate the brutal East African and trans-Saharan slave trades (1888-1889). He died in Algiers on the 26th of November 1892 at the age of 67 years. His episcopal motto was "CARITAS" (Charity) with the emblem (logo) of a "MOTHER PELICAN" feeding its young ones on its blood, a symbol of Christ, the Eucharist and Christian Charity.

Foundation of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa in Algeria

Even before leaving France for Algiers, Lavigerie envisioned Algeria as a big 'gateway' through which Africa, South of Sahara was going to be evangelised. He was going to make Algeria the cradle of a great and generous Christian nation which in turn would carry the Light of the Gospel beyond the Sahara Desert into Central Africa.

In less than one year and half after his arrival in Algiers (May 1867), he founded the Society of the Missionaries of Africa (October 1868). A year later, in September 1869, he founded the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (MSOLA).

Ten years after the foundation of the M.Afr, he sent the first team of ten missionaries to Equatorial Africa, five for the Nyanza Region (around Lake Victoria Uganda included) and five for the region around Lake Tanganyika. They left Algiers in April 1878, via Marseilles, Zanzibar and Bagamoyo and when they arrived at Tabora the two groups separated. Those coming to Uganda took the direction of Mwanza and from there they came to Lubaga, the capital of

Buganda Kingdom, by canoes on Lake Nalubaale (Victoria).

The 1st Catholic Missionaries to arrive in Uganda

The first to arrive were Fr. Simeon Lourdel, affectionately known as Pere Mapeera, and Bro. Amans Delmas in February 1879. They were followed in June by Frs. Leon Livinhac, Leon Barbot, and Ludovic Girault. These five men became the first Catholic missionaries in Uganda. Twenty years later, in October 1899, six members of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (MSOLA) arrived in Uganda, becoming the first religious women in the country.

Evangelisation from the City (Kibuga) and with the Elite

The missionaries would have preferred to settle in rural areas, away from the royal palace and the bustle of the capital. However, King Muteesa I had different plans. He insisted that they establish themselves near his palace at Lubaga. As a result, Christianity in Uganda began in the palace and at the centre of the kingdom (Kibuga or city) and among the elite.

The first public proclamation of the Gospel took place in the (Twekobe), the audience hall inside the palace. Like the Areopagus mentioned in Acts 17:16–34, it became a place of encounter and dialogue. The listeners included the king, his entourage, chiefs and notables (Abaami n'Abakungu), royal pages (Abagalagala), and many other influential figures. This proved providential because it was much easier for the converted elite to influence and convert the common ordinary people

than it would have been the other way round. Likewise, the persecutions and killings of the Abasomi (Those who pray or Christians) might never have taken place had Christianity begun in remote villages far from the king and the capital. Indeed, as the prophet Isaiah tells us, God's ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Lavigerie instructs the missionaries to prepare Africans to be apostles to their fellow Africans

“Prepare Africans to be Apostles to their fellow Africans. You are initiators; the lasting work will be done by the Africans themselves.” (Directives to the Missionaries of the first Caravan 1878)

Following this instruction, the missionaries successfully prepared the local agents of evangelisation including mainly the catechists, local clergy and indigenous religious men and women. Some of the martyrs pioneered the work of the catechists, for example: Bali-kuddembe, Kaggwa, Mulumba and Muzeeyi.

The Missionaries of Africa and the Ugandan Martyrs

The Ugandan Martyrs were among the first generation of the Ugandan Catholics evangelised by the pioneer missionaries. In less than seven years and out of these only four years with the presence of the missionaries, these neophytes and catechumens were able to shed their blood because of their faith. Indeed, this was the work of the Spirit and Grace of God! But, it was also the work of the Blessed Virgin Mary whom the pioneer missionaries, right from the beginning of their mission, declared to be the Protagonist Evangeliser of this coun-



try: "We swear that the Blessed Virgin Mary will be our teacher and superior, so that by her, through her and with her, we may understand and fulfil the will of her Divine Son, for whose Glory, we would like to wholly sacrifice ourselves. We declare that whatever good will be done here, it will be Mary who will have done it and therefore all glory will be given to her." (Nabulagala, 2nd July 1879) We should never forget this!

The Missionaries of Africa are proud of the Ugandan Martyrs. Their victory and glory is also ours because divine Providence chose to use our Society to bring forth in the Faith the souls of these Martyrs. However, we also take seriously Pope Francis' warning: "Past glories were a beginning, but you are called to create future glories. This is what the Church asks of you. Be witnesses like

the martyrs, who gave their lives for the Gospel." (Lubaga Cathedral, 28th November 2015) Our Predecessors, Pere Mapeera and Companions, bore the pains of birth of those martyrs; it is our turn to bear the pains of birth of the martyrs of today and tomorrow!

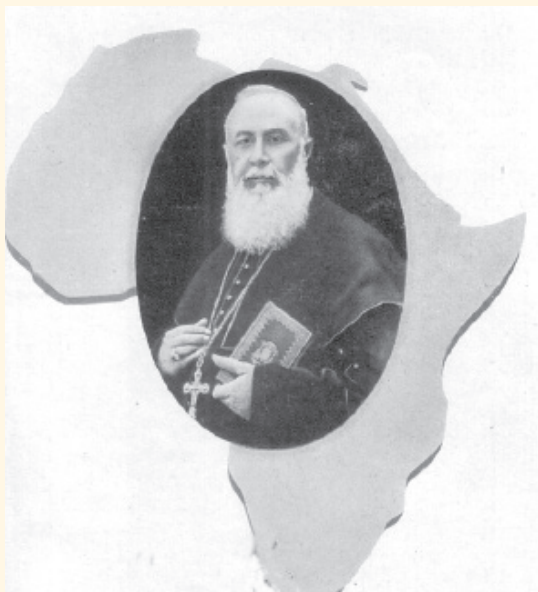
"Ne gw'ozala akukubira enjoma n'ozina." (Even your child can beat the drum for you to dance). Few months after the killings of the Ugandan Martyrs, Cardinal Lavignerie exhorted his missionaries "to admire and imitate their courage". (Circular Letter, Algiers, 19 March 1887) So, these martyrs, though they are our spiritual sons, they are our models in following Christ. In them, we are invited to trust that the Spirit and Grace of God that operated in them can do the same wonders in us today.

At the occasion of their beatification, the Superior General, Msgr Leon Livinhac who taught the martyrs catechism and administered the sacrament of Confirmation to a number of them, wrote a circular letter to the Society in which he said that:

"The beatification of the Ugandan Martyrs will herald a notable spiritual renewal in the supernatural life of our Society; the beginning, so to speak, of a new era of piety, zeal, generosity and regularity, remarkable, therefore, for saintly labours which will give great glory to God and bring Him thousands of souls." (Algiers 6th March 1920)

The elevation of the Ugandan Martyrs to the levels of the Blessed and the Saints in 1964, were crucial moments heralding a new era for the Society and its members; an era of spiritual and apostolic renewal. Those two 'kairos moments' were not limited in space and time; they are on-going. In other words, these Martyrs are a continuous call to us to work tirelessly on that spiritual and apostolic renewal.

Today, the Missionaries of Africa who are also known as the white father continue their mission of evangelization and pastoral ministry, promoting peace and reconciliation, supporting education and healthcare, and accompanying people who are poor or marginalized. The congregation is increasingly made up of African members, showing the growth of the Church in Africa and the continuing commitment to missionary service across cultures and nations.



ARU Inaugurates the inter-congregational Formation Programme for Religious in Preparation for their Perpetual Profession



A light moment of the Junior Religious Professed in front of the Iconic statue of St. Mbaaga during their inauguration of the the Inter-institutes annual National course at St. Mbaaga's Seminary, Ggaba. Photo By ARU.

By Benedict Mukoni

Every year, the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), organizes a month-long course for young religious men and women from different congregations in Uganda who are preparing for their perpetual profession of vows.

The 2026 programme, under the theme, “Embracing Unity in Diversity in Consecrated Life in the Synodal Church”, was officially inaugurated on 28 June at St. Mbaaga’s Major Seminary, Ggaba, with a Eucharistic celebration of the Holy Mass, presided over by Fr. Joseph Luyombya, OSM, ARU Executive member. It brought together 93 participants from 16 women and men religious congregations across Uganda.

This period of spiritual and personal preparation offers the participants an opportunity for deep reflection and renewal, helping them to gain a better understanding of the life they are choosing and to strengthen their life-long commitment ahead of their perpetual profession of vows.

In his homily during the Eucharistic celebration, Fr. Joseph invited the young religious to reflect on two key pillars that would guide their formation journey; Vocation and hospitality. Drawing from the day’s readings, he reminded them that their vocation is rooted in a personal choice to love and follow Christ most closely above everything else. He encouraged them to use the four-week course as an opportunity to step away from the distractions of daily ministry and community life in order to examine their relationship with God and rediscover the heart of their religious calling.

In attendance was also the Secretary General of ARU, Sr. Jane Yatuha, OLG. In her address to the participants, Sr. Jane expressed appreciation to the Major Superiors for their vision, commitment, and continued support of ARU’s formation programme. Sr. Jane was accompanied by some members of the ARU Administration who oversee this program together with the two program coordinators.

During this time, Participants will cover different topics

offered by different facilitators;

Embracing synodality in the mission: conversation in the spirit synodal methodology

Consecrated life and canon law: a pathway to fidelity, freedom and mission

Mental health and human consecration: discerning and embracing god's will for mission

Missionary readiness for the religious in the synodal church: mission as a shared ecclesial responsibility.

During their stay, participants will also take part in enriching activities such as sports, cultural sharing and celebrations, and visits to significant faith sites in Kampala, including the Namugongo Martyrs Shrine.

Other activities during the four-week course will include; sports, diverse cultural day celebrations, touring of the Martyrs holy sites, among others.



Fr. Henry Kajubi: A Holy Cross Priest and Nuclear Physicist Exploring the Seen and the Unseen



Fr. Henry Kajubi, Holy Cross Priest and PhD Candidate in Nuclear Physics

By Immaculate Tusingwire - MMS

A priest is always associated with the altar, prayer, and the care of souls. In our feature story today, we bring you Fr. Henry Kajubi who has defied this association and lives at a dynamic intersection of faith and science as a Holy Cross priest and a PhD candidate in Nuclear Physics. In an interview with the Association of Religious in Uganda's Prophetic Witness, he shares his remarkable journey to both Priesthood and the world of science, reflecting on the relationship between faith and physics, and the Christian responsibility of caring for creation.

If someone asked you who Henry Kajubi Ssentenza is, what would you say?

I am Fr. Henry Kajubi Ssentenza, a religious priest of the Congregation of Holy Cross, where I have served for the past fifteen years, including nine years in the priesthood. I hail from Kasana-Luweero Diocese and belong to Nakaseke Parish. Currently, I serve at Holy Cross Lake View Secondary School in the Diocese of

Jinja as the Deputy Headteacher in charge of Discipline and Management. In addition, I teach Mathematics and Physics

Besides my ministry at Lake View, I am a PhD candidate in Nuclear Physics at Makerere University, specializing in Spectroscopy and Environmental Radioactivity. I am deeply in love with both faith and science. If you look for me at Makerere University, you will most likely find me in the Physics Department; if you cross over to the University of Nairobi, you will find me immersed in the laboratory at the Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology, conducting my research experiments. I see my life's work as bridging the gap between the altar and the lab. I look at the invisible forces of nature to see how we can become better stewards of the world God entrusted to us.

Tell us briefly about your journey to priesthood

My journey to the priesthood started with a deep wonder about both the seen and the unseen. Even as a young boy in primary three, I admired Monsignor Lawrence Mbwega at Lweza Parish and felt a strong pull toward the life of a priest. When I shared this admiration with him, he gave me a simple, practical starting point: 'Go and start serving as an altar boy.'

As I grew older, that curiosity naturally expanded into the sciences. By the time I reached high school, I found myself praying a very specific prayer, asking God for the grace to love Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Mathematics, and to offer them at A-level. He answered that prayer beautifully, granting me a government scholarship to study a Bachelor of Science with Education, majoring in Mathematics and Physics, at Makerere University. After graduating, I joined the Congregation of Holy Cross in 2008 and was ordained a priest in 2017.

What inspired you to pursue a scientific field that many people may not associate with religious life?

Our ministry, like Jesus' own, is fundamentally about giving life. I have always believed that faith starts with a faithful response to the laws of nature, where a profound divine revelation is already hidden. When we understand nature better, we grow to grasp the unseen.

Think about the Gospel, where Jesus spat on the ground, made mud, and smeared it to heal a blind man's eyes (cf. John 9:6). How is that possible? As a physicist, I see the Creator interacting directly with fundamental atomic matter, reorganizing it by His divine authority. In Nuclear Physics, quantum mechanics explores this exact frontier, studying the tiniest, unseen subatomic particles and revealing the incredible, hidden mysteries of God embedded in creation. Looking into this quantum world has simply made me fall deeper in love with the Creator. Pursuing Nuclear Physics is just an extension of this Love. It is not a distraction from my vocation; it helps me see the grace holding the invisible fabric of creation together.

How do you see the relationship between faith and science, especially for those who may see the two as being in conflict?

Though the relationship between faith and science presents profound questions that demand careful reflection, I have always found that they ultimately converge because they both seek the truth. Faith gives me the meaning and purpose of life, while science explains the mechanisms of how God's creation operates. They do not fight; they fulfill each other.

I have a deep appreciation for the wisdom and genius of St. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. He beautifully reminded us that faith and reason are the two wings on which the human spirit rises to contemplate the truth. The same God who reveals Himself through Scripture is the God whose fingerprints are visible in the order and beauty of creation. Science is a language of God. Now, why shouldn't we love it? The more deeply I study nature, the more I am led to wonder at the Creator who sustains it.

As a priest, my goal is to bring souls closer to God and give hope to the suffering. As a Nuclear Physicist, studying environmental radioactivity helps me protect public health and safeguard our water, air, soil, etc. Both callings flow from the same source of divine charity. Science is simply a beautiful gift to live out our Chris-

tian vocation of service and stewardship. I encourage you my fellow priests and religious not to fear the sciences, but to embrace them as valuable pathways for serving humanity and deepening our appreciation of the Creator.

Are there aspects of Catholic teaching that particularly inspire your environmental research?

Absolutely. At its core, my research is driven by a fundamental Catholic truth: creation is a sacred gift from God, and we have a serious moral obligation to be its responsible stewards. Our work in the sciences is a vital way we cooperate with the Creator to unfold His creation, elevate human culture, and serve the human family (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 57).

Looking back, I see a beautiful providential design in my academic path. During my Master's research, I focused on studying radionuclides in food. Now, for my Ph.D., I am investigating radionuclides and other potentially cancer-causing agents in water. There is something deeply sacramental about this journey. After all, food nourishes life, and water sustains it. By examining their safety, I am actively defending human health and safeguarding vulnerable communities.

As both a religious priest and a physicist, I cannot look at this as mere data collection or cold academic research. For me, it is a direct extension of my priesthood, a tangible form of preaching and service. The altar is where I celebrate the mysteries of faith; the laboratory is where I explore the mysteries of creation. Both are places of service, drawing me closer to God while helping me serve His people. Together, they remind me that knowledge must be guided by love and placed at the service of humanity. Science gives me the tools to understand the physical world, but it is my faith that gives meaning to that knowledge, directing it toward the common good and inspiring me to care for both human dignity and our common home.

How does your work contribute to environmental protection?

In a very practical way, my research acts as a line of defense for both creation and human life. I focus on assessing radionuclides and other toxic, cancer-causing contaminants that sneak into our food supply and water sources. Since we are, quite literally, what we

eat and drink, safeguarding these essential resources is one of the most direct ways we can protect the human person.

By gathering hard scientific evidence on how these contaminants spread through agricultural practices, industrial pollution, mining, and poor waste disposal, I am able to provide the data needed to make informed, life-saving decisions. It is about creating policies that stop the degradation before it reaches our people.

As both a priest and a physicist, I do not see this as a detached corporate environmental project. I see it as a concrete service to the common good. It is a practical, modern expression of what it truly means to exercise responsible stewardship over the world God has entrusted to us.

What misconceptions do people commonly have about nuclear physics?

Without a doubt, the biggest misconception is that nuclear physics is strictly about atomic bombs and weapons of mass destruction. When people find out I am a priest specializing in this field, their immediate reaction is almost always: ‘So, Father, are you building bombs?’

It is a completely natural reaction because the word ‘nuclear’ is so heavily associated with war, radiation disasters, and fear. But that is only a tiny, distorted piece of the picture. The truth is that every single human being, every living organism, and the entire universe has a nuclear dimension. Matter itself is made up of atoms and atomic nuclei. God has placed one of the greatest energies in creation within the smallest of things, the atomic nucleus, and within the largest of

bodies, the stars themselves. The same nuclear energy that powers our Sun and sustains life on Earth is a profound reminder of the wisdom, beauty, and power woven into creation. Yet, like many of God’s gifts, how we choose to use it can mean the difference between life and death, healing and destruction, stewardship and exploitation.

My research is miles away from weaponry. I focus entirely on food, water safety, and identifying potential cancer-causing contaminants in the environment. Here in Uganda, and across the globe, peaceful nuclear techniques are used every single day to improve agricultural yields, assess water quality, monitor environmental pollution, and save lives through cancer diagnostics and targeted radiotherapy. Far from creating tools for destruction, my work uses the hidden forces of physics to protect human life, promote environmental stewardship, and serve the common good

If you could leave our readers with one key message about faith, science, and caring for our common home, what would it be?

It is beautifully simple: love nature and love God. We must always remember that the very same God who reveals Himself to us through faith has also given us the gift of reason to understand the world around us. These two gifts are meant to walk hand in hand.

By bringing the light of faith into the laboratory and the precision of science into our care for the environment, we do more than just solve technical problems. We actively help build a healthier, more just, and more hopeful world for our people today, and for the generations yet to come. May it be done so that in all things God may be glorified (cf. 1 Pet 4:11), for He is all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28).”



Pope Leo XIV on Human Dignity in the Time of Artificial Intelligence – Magnifica Humanitas



By Fr. Paul Nsubuga

Artificial intelligence (AI) is advancing rapidly and has attracted significant interest from both private enterprises and governmental bodies. The primary focus has been on its technological breakthroughs and potential applications. Although concerns about its rapid development and associated ethical challenges have been raised, these issues are often overshadowed by widespread enthusiasm. Consequently, AI is often portrayed as an ideal technology capable of addressing all of humanity's challenges.

In his encyclical “Magnifica Humanitas (translated as magnificent humanity): On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence,” formally released on May 25, 2026, Pope Leo XIV, calls for a pause in the unregulated expansion of this technology. He argues that the pursuit of AI's success is often prioritised over the dignity of those involved in its development. The Pope calls for restraint in the advancement of AI.

While some may find it unexpected that his first major document addresses Artificial Intelligence, this focus

aligns with his stated intention to follow the example of Pope Leo XIII. Pope Leo XIII defended human dignity during the Industrial Revolution through his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, issued on May 15, 1891. In that document, Pope Leo XIII examined the effects of industrialisation on workers, families, and the essence of humanity – highlighting how individuals were reduced to mere components of a production system. He also addressed the responsibilities between labour and capital, as well as the relationship between government and citizens, during a period when efficiency was often valued above human welfare.

Pope Leo XIV identifies AI as the defining revolution of the contemporary era. Drawing a parallel to Pope Leo XIII's response to the Industrial Revolution, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost adopted the name Leo XIV to emphasise the challenges posed by AI. In his encyclical, Pope Leo XIV articulates the Church's responsibility to address technological developments. He maintains that the Church's mission is to disseminate the Gospel and Christ's message of salvation. According to John 10:10, Jesus says he came so that humanity might have life in

abundance. While this fullness is ultimately realised in heaven, it also pertains to earthly existence. Jesus seeks to deliver humanity not only from sin but also from the suffering and oppression resulting from sin. Consequently, the Church is concerned with both spiritual salvation and the quality of life in the present. This commitment includes acts of charity and advocacy against injustice or actions that undermine human dignity, as every individual is created in God's image. In 1Jn 4:20, the apostle reminds us that we cannot pretend to love God, whom we do not see, and hate our neighbour, whom we see. St. Paul also reminds us in Rm 13:8 that love is the only debt we owe to each other. By addressing threats to human dignity, the Church continues Christ's mission to promote a full and meaningful life.

The Church's principles of protecting human dignity, promoting the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, social justice, and integral development are collectively referred to as Catholic Social Teaching. In contemporary society, nearly every aspect of life is influenced by AI, which has the potential to marginalise individuals and prioritise technology over human relationships. Preserving authentic human connections remains essential. Pope Leo XIV examines the relevance of each component of Catholic Social Teaching to AI and explores strategies for its responsible application. AI systems, which depend on large language models and extensive data sets, risk reducing individuals to mere statistics or economic units. Digital resources, particularly information and data, constitute a common good and should not be monopolised by a select few. Pope Leo XIV acknowledges that, despite the significant advancements enabled by AI, the technology can also facilitate manipulation, control, surveillance, and the formation of monopolies.

With the increasing adoption of AI tools across various sectors, particularly in education, Pope Leo XIV cautions that there is a risk of producing a generation de-

ficient in critical thinking skills. While he acknowledges AI's potential to enhance creativity, he also highlights its role in generating fake news, deep fakes, and other forms of harmful content that require urgent attention. Additionally, there is growing concern regarding the deployment of AI in warfare through autonomous weapons, which he asserts should be unequivocally condemned and prohibited.

A comprehensive understanding of Pope Leo XIV's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* requires recognising that he does not oppose Artificial Intelligence per se. Rather, he advocates inclusive, transparent dialogue among all AI stakeholders. Developers should engage with end users; policymakers should collaborate with funders of AI research and development; and experts from disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology should assess AI's societal impacts. Broad participation is essential, as the future of AI cannot be determined solely by engineers and programmers, given its profound personal and social implications. For this reason, open dialogue is imperative. Pope Leo XIV acknowledges the positive contributions of technology and AI, yet cautions against allowing their benefits to overshadow potential risks.

The Holy See also addresses issues that many global leaders have hesitated to confront. He asserts that if the exponential growth of AI remains unchecked and continues to supplant human roles across all domains, humanity risks losing its essential identity in favour of technological progress. The encyclical thus serves as a significant reflection on the human condition in the era of AI and is relevant to both Christian and non-Christian audiences, as it emphasises the preservation and promotion of human dignity. By articulating these concerns, Pope Leo XIV provides a thoughtful analysis of what it means to be human in the age of AI, offering valuable insights for all individuals as AI increasingly influences society.

PUBLISHED TODAY!

Magnifica humanitas



Africa Synodality Observers Meet to Strengthen the Church's Journey Toward the 2027–2028 Ecclesial Assemblies



A group Memorial photo of the Africa Synodality Observers during their meeting to strengthen the Church's journey toward the 2027 - 2028 Ecclesial Assemblies. Courtesy Photo.

Sr. Justine Naluggya, IHMR

Synodality observers from English-speaking countries across Africa met for a landmark formation and planning meeting in Nairobi, reaffirming the Church's commitment to fostering a more participatory, missionary, and listening Church as preparations intensify for the 2027 and 2028 Ecclesial Assemblies.

The observers are members of the Synodality Observatory, an initiative established by the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SE-CAM) to strengthen the visibility of the Church in Africa by identifying, documenting, and promoting best practices emerging from the implementation phase of the Synod on Synodality.

Participants included observers representing SECAM's regional bodies, notably AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa), IMBISA

(Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa), and RECOWA (Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa). They shared inspiring experiences from their respective regions on the use of the Conversation in the Spirit methodology. This communal sharing highlighted emerging models of participation, communion, mission, and co-responsibility that are already bearing fruit in dioceses, parishes, religious institutes, ecclesial movements, and Small Christian Communities.

Throughout the meeting, participants reflected on the transformative impact of synodality in their local Churches and explored scientific and pastoral methodologies for observing, documenting, analysing, and disseminating the lived experience of synodality across the continent. The initiative responds to the growing need to preserve Africa's rich synodal heritage and ensure that its experiences contribute meaningfully to

the ongoing discernment of the universal Church.

As both an observer and a participant in this encounter, the most touching statement shared was:

“The Church in Africa is not merely implementing synodality; she is living it in countless communities every day,” one participant observed. “Our responsibility as observers is to make these experiences visible, ensuring that the voices, initiatives, and pastoral innovations emerging from our local Churches become part of the wider ecclesial conversation.”

Serving as a continental platform, the Synodality Observatory seeks to preserve the fruits of synodality through attentive and collective observation and gathering of information and practices on ground, publication, and theological reflection. By building a reliable body of evidence on synodal implementation, the initiative will support Local Churches, Regional Episcopal Conferences, SECAM, and the General Secretariat of the Synod in assessing the progress of the implementation phase leading to the 2027–2028 Ecclesial Assemblies.

Participants also developed common strategies for systematically tracking, documenting, and publishing synodal practices across Africa.

Particular emphasis was placed on ethical data collection, the identification of best practices, theological

reflection, and the creation of sustainable structures capable of accompanying the implementation of synodality at every level of ecclesial life from continental and regional structures to national episcopal conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutions, and grassroots Christian communities.

“By carefully documenting how God’s People journey together, we help preserve the memory of the Spirit’s work and provide valuable resources for future discernment and pastoral planning for the Church in Africa and beyond.” participant remarked

In a significant sign of continental collaboration, a parallel formation meeting was simultaneously held in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, bringing together observers from Francophone Africa. The two gatherings reflect SECAM’s commitment to ensuring that the diverse experiences of the African Church are faithfully captured and integrated into a shared continental process.

As the implementation phase of the Synod on Synodality continues, the Synodality Observatory Initiative stands as a tangible expression of Africa’s commitment to walking together, learning from one another, and contributing actively to the life and mission of the universal Church. Through this collaborative effort, SECAM seeks not only to accompany the reception of synodality across the continent but also to ensure that the rich experiences of African local Churches become a lasting gift to the entire People of God.



SLYIU Transforming Uganda's Vulnerable Youth through Enterprise



The Sister-Led Youth Initiative (SLYIU) National Coordinator, Sr. Caroline Bacia, LSMIG Commissioning students who had completed their vocational studies. Courtesy Photo

Sr. Caroline Bacia, National Coordinator ARU-SLYIU

With the launch of Phase III in January 2026, the Sister-Led Youth Initiative Uganda (SLYIU), a programme of the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), reached another significant milestone through the establishment of three mega businesses owned by religious institutes with support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

The new phase marks a major step in SLYIU's innovative model, which combines vocational education, entrepreneurship, and faith-driven social enterprise to transform the lives of Uganda's most vulnerable

young people. By equipping them with practical skills and connecting them to meaningful employment, the initiative is creating pathways to dignified work, economic independence, and lasting hope.

The Mega Businesses are not just income-generating projects, but sustainable social enterprises designed to strengthen the economic capacity of religious institutes while creating employment opportunities for graduates of vocational training centres. At the same time, they provide a second chance for young people whose education was interrupted by poverty and other uncertainties, enabling them to acquire marketable skills and practical work experience that prepares them to become self-reliant entrepreneurs

and agents of change in their communities.

Unlike conventional vocational programmes where graduates struggle to secure jobs, the SLYIU invented a model which allows young people to transition directly into productive work, where they continue to sharpen their skills while earning an income.

The enterprises include Mother Annetta Bakery (MAB) in Adjumani run by the Sacred Heart Sisters of Moyo, Skilled Designers Enterprise (SDE) in Tororo run by the Little Sisters of St. Francis, and Divine Mercy Textile Enterprise in Nebbi run by the Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu (LSMIG).

The businesses are designed to bridge the gap between training and employment by providing graduates with opportunities to gain practical experience while earning an income. They also strengthen the sustainability of vocational training centres by generating resources that can be reinvested into youth skills development.

The bakery is expanding production while providing hands-on training in commercial baking. The garment and fashion enterprise equips young people with technical and entrepreneurial skills to compete in Uganda's growing fashion industry. Meanwhile, the textile enterprise produces school uniforms, knitted sweaters, embroidery, school bags, and durable sandals, creating employment opportunities for graduates while responding to the increasing demand for quality school supplies.

The impact of the SLYIU model is already evident in the lives of its beneficiaries. During the first-term holidays in May 2026, many students chose to remain at their workplaces instead of returning home, using the opportunity to deepen their practical experience and improve their chances of future employ-

ment.

For many young women, the programme represents more than vocational training—it offers hope for a better future.

“Before I joined Toto Maria Vocational Training Centre, I was a victim of poverty because girls’ education is not valued in the Karamoja region,” said Vivian Ageno. “I had no hope of returning to school. Today, I am determined to move from victim to victor. The skills I have acquired will help me overcome poverty.”

Vivian’s story reflects the aspirations of many young women who now see vocational education not simply as skills training but as a pathway to dignity, self-reliance, and freedom from poverty.

Across the programme, beneficiaries speak of newfound confidence as they apply their skills in construction, tailoring, baking, and design. Some have already invested their holiday earnings in goats, piglets, and poultry, establishing small household enterprises while continuing their education. Rather than waiting for formal employment, they are embracing entre-

preneurship as the foundation for their future.

The initiative has also highlighted persistent social barriers. In Karamoja, several girls reported that some of their classmates failed to return to school after the holidays because they were forced into early marriage. One trainee explained that many parents still view daughters primarily as a source of bride wealth and fail to recognize the long-term value of educating girls.

She appealed for continued support to keep girls in school until they complete their education, alongside greater community sensitization to change attitudes towards girls’ education.

As SLYIU enters a new phase, its success is measured not only by the enterprises it has established but, more importantly, by the lives it is transforming. By linking vocational training directly to productive businesses, the initiative has created a sustainable model where education leads to employment, employment nurtures entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship contributes to poverty reduction and stronger communities.



CCCU Safeguarding Training Opens New Doors in Protecting Children with Disabilities in Uganda's Schools



Open discussions during the CCCU safeguarding training about protecting children with disabilities in Uganda's Schools. Photo by CCCU staff

By Benedict Mukoni

Catholic Care for Children in Uganda (CCCU), a program under the Association of the Religious in Uganda (ARU), conducted a four-day workshop training which brought together administrators and special needs teachers from ten newly mapped childcare institutions and schools with disability units across Uganda.

The training held in Nsambya, Kampala at Cabana Villa Hotel from May 11 – 14, 2026, was in response to the growing need to strengthen child protection and safeguarding systems in schools and childcare institutions (CCIs) serving children with disabilities.

Facilitated by Dr. Ronald Luwangula, a lecturer at Makerere University's Department of Social Work and Social Administration, the sessions focused on equipping participants with practical knowledge and legal under-

standing needed to create safer and more inclusive environments for children with disabilities.

According to CCCU team, the workshop was designed in response to increasing concerns about the vulnerability of children with disabilities to abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation both within schools and in communities. Participants explored child rights, safeguarding principles, international and national legal frameworks, and institutional responsibilities in protecting children.

One of the key messages emerging from the training was that safeguarding should not be viewed as a responsibility limited to residential childcare institutions. Facilitators emphasized that schools and educational settings equally carry the obligation to ensure the protection and dignity of learners, particularly children with disabilities.

Participants described the workshop as timely and

transformative. Some admitted that before the training, they had limited understanding of child safeguarding and its relevance within educational institutions. The training helped bridge critical knowledge gaps and increased confidence among school leaders and teachers to identify, prevent, and respond to cases of abuse and neglect.

The workshop also encouraged schools and child care institutions to begin developing internal safeguarding policies, establish child-friendly reporting mechanisms, and integrate child protection discussions into school programs and meetings.

Facilitators noted that children with disabilities often face heightened protection risks due to stigma, communication barriers, dependency on caregivers, and limited access to reporting systems. Participants therefore called for continuous mentorship, more practical policy development exercises, and stronger collaboration with parents, local governments, and child protection stakeholders.

The training came to a denouement with a commitment by participating institutions to strengthen safeguarding systems within the next few months through policy devel-

opment, staff sensitization, and improved referral mechanisms. ARU-CCCU officials pledged follow-up mentorship and monitoring visits to support implementation efforts.

ARU-CCCU officials believe the initiative marks an important step toward building safer and more inclusive learning environments for children with disabilities in Uganda.

“This training laid a strong foundation for strengthening child protection and safeguarding practices within participating schools,” officials noted.



The Religious Sisters Counselling Hub: A Beacon of Hope and Healing



From the extreme (left) is Sr. Maurence Katushabe, Counselor Sr. Jane Ngamita (middle), Counselor and Sr. Maria Josephine Nazziwa extreme (righ), counselling psychologist. Photo By ARU.

By Sr. Josephine Nazziwa, IHMR

For many individuals facing emotional, social, and psychological challenges, the Religious Sisters Counselling Hub has become a beacon of hope, offering a safe space where healing, growth, and transformation take place.

Through its comprehensive counselling services and community outreach programs, the Hub continues to make a significant impact on the lives of individuals, families, religious communities, and young people. What began as a centre for emotional support has evolved into a nurturing environment where people are empowered to confront life's challenges and rediscover their inner strength.

At the heart of the Hub's work are individual counselling sessions, where clients meet privately with

trained Sister Counsellors to discuss personal concerns ranging from stress, family conflicts, and academic pressures to emotional and psychological difficulties. These one-on-one interactions provide a confidential and supportive setting that encourages openness, trust, and self-discovery.

Beyond individual counselling, the Hub promotes healing through group counselling and peer support sessions. These gatherings bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds to share experiences, learn from one another, and build meaningful connections. Participants often discover that they are not alone in their struggles, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual encouragement.

Mental health awareness remains

a key pillar of the Hub's mission. Through regular workshops and seminars, participants gain valuable insights into topics such as stress and anger management, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, communication skills, personality profiling, childhood trauma, human sexuality, emotional resilience, and ageing gracefully. These educational programs equip community members with practical skills to navigate daily challenges and maintain emotional well-being.

The Hub also recognizes the importance of holistic wellness. Recreational and wellness activities, including mindfulness exercises, relaxation techniques, and team-building sessions, provide opportunities for participants to reduce stress, strengthen social bonds, and improve their overall

quality of life. Many leave these sessions feeling refreshed, motivated, and better equipped to face personal and professional demands.

In an effort to extend its impact beyond the counselling centre, the Hub conducts outreach programs in schools, religious institutions, and parish communities. These initiatives help raise awareness about mental health services, encourage help-seeking behaviour, and challenge the stigma that often

surrounds emotional and psychological struggles. By bringing counselling closer to communities, the Hub is fostering a culture of acceptance, compassion, and support.

The success of the Religious Sisters Counselling Hub lies not only in the problems it helps to resolve but also in the lives it transforms. Its work demonstrates that counselling is more than a response to a crisis; it is a pathway to self-understanding, resilience, healing, and

inner freedom.

As the Hub continues to serve communities, it stands as proof of the power of compassion, patience, and professional guidance in restoring hope and promoting mental well-being. For those who have witnessed its impact firsthand, the experience has deepened their appreciation of counselling as a vital tool for personal growth and has inspired them to contribute positively to the well-being of others.



Hilton Foundation Funding Boosts Religious Sisters' Fight against Human Trafficking in Uganda



Intense sensitization against Human Trafficking on the media; the National coordinator of St. Bakhita Anti-human Trafficking, Sr. Semerira Mbambu (Yellow attire) share a group photo shortly after a sensitization program on Radio Maria Moroto.

By Sr. Semerita Mbambu, Coordinator Bakhita Anti Human Trafficking

The St. Bakhita Anti-Human Trafficking Network Uganda, a network under Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) has received a major boost in its efforts to combat human trafficking following the approval of a three-year project funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation in June, 2026.

The funding will strengthen prevention initiatives, expand survivor rehabilitation services, and enhance the capacity of Religious Sisters across Uganda to serve as frontline advocates against human trafficking.

The project marks a significant milestone for the Network as it continues its mission of preventing hu-

man trafficking, protecting vulnerable communities, and supporting survivors in rebuilding their lives. Through the Foundation's support, the Network will scale up awareness campaigns, strengthen community engagement, and provide continued training and mentorship for Religious Sisters working in different parts of the country.

Since the beginning of the year, the Network has facilitated rescue and empowerment programs for more than 25 survivors of human trafficking. Through psychosocial support, counselling, skills development, economic empowerment, and community reintegration, survivors have been able to rebuild their lives with renewed dignity, confidence,

and hope for a brighter future.

A key focus of the Network's work has been strengthening the capacity of Religious Sisters to identify, prevent, and respond to human trafficking cases within their communities and ministries. Through training and awareness programs, Sisters are acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to protect vulnerable women, children, and youth from exploitation.

Currently, the Network is building the capacity of Religious Sisters across Uganda's four ecclesiastical provinces of Kampala, Gulu, Mbarara, and Tororo. These Sisters play a critical role in raising awareness in schools, parishes, communities,

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in schools, parishes, communities, and institutions about the dangers of human trafficking and the importance of safe migration practices.

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation-funded project will further empower these efforts by providing resources for expanded prevention programs, survivor support services, and nationwide awareness campaigns. It will also create opportunities for ongoing leadership development and capacity building among Religious Sisters, strengthening their role as agents of change in the fight against human trafficking.

The approval of the project reflects confidence in the Network's vision and commitment to creating a Uganda free from human trafficking. Through strategic partnerships, faith-based leadership, and community engagement, the Network continues to address the root causes of trafficking while promoting human dignity, social justice, and protection for the most vulnerable.

Inspired by the witness of Saint Josephine Bakhita, the Network remains committed to standing in solidarity with survivors and vulnerable communities, working tirelessly to prevent exploitation, restore hope, and create pathways to a brighter future.

The St. Bakhita Anti-Human Trafficking Network Uganda extends its sincere appreciation to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Religious Congregations, diocesan leaders, government agencies, development partners, and all supporters whose contributions make this mission possible. Together, they are strengthening communities, empowering Religious Sisters, restoring dignity to survivors, and advancing the vision of a Uganda where every person can live free from human trafficking.

"Empowering Sisters, Restoring Lives, and Preventing Human Trafficking Across Uganda."



ARU-CCCU Strengthening Care through Sustainable Resource Mobilization



The ARU-CCCU Resource Mobilization manager, Mr. Emmanuel Epalat during one of his training sessions to Sisters on how to mobilize resource to continue strengthening child care sustainably. Courtesy photo.

*By Emmanuel Epalat, ARU-CCCU
Resource Mobilization Manager*

Catholic institutions caring for vulnerable children across Uganda are strengthening their capacity to sustain essential services following resource mobilization support provided by the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) through the Catholic Care for Children in Uganda (ARU-CCCU) initiative

Between May 15 and June 16, 2026, visits to nine Catholic-led institutions in Central and Eastern Uganda revealed stories of resilience, compassion, and transformation.

These institutions serve children facing some of life's most difficult challenges, including autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, visual im-

pairment, intellectual disabilities, abandonment, neglect, poverty, and family separation. Yet what stands out most is not their vulnerability, it is their determination.

In classrooms and therapy rooms, children are overcoming developmental barriers and learning new ways to communicate. Young people are acquiring vocational and life skills that will help them become independent and productive members of society. Children once isolated by disability are now actively participating in school, recreation, and community life.

Behind every milestone is a team of dedicated Religious Sisters, caregivers, teachers, therapists, nurses, and social workers whose commitment extends far beyond professional responsibility. Their work

reflects a deep conviction that every child possesses inherent dignity and deserves the opportunity to flourish.

Yet amid these inspiring successes, another reality cannot be ignored. Many of these institutions are operating under increasing financial pressure. Rising operational costs, declining donor support, and limited fundraising capacity are threatening programs that hundreds of children rely on for education, healthcare, rehabilitation, protection, and psychosocial support.

The challenge facing these institutions is not a lack of passion or commitment, it is sustainability.

Recognizing this need, the Association of Religious in Uganda through the Catholic Care for Children in

Uganda (ARU-CCCU) initiative has supported 34 institutional leaders and frontline staff with practical training in resource mobilization, proposal development, donor engagement, partnership building, accountability, documentation, and sustainability planning.

The goal is clear; equip institutions with the tools and systems necessary to secure their future and continue serving vulnerable children for generations to come.

As a result, participating institutions committed themselves to establishing Resource Mobilization Committees, diversifying funding sources, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and building strategic partnerships to support long-term growth.

At first glance, these interventions may appear technical, but their impact is profoundly human. A well-written proposal can secure funding that enables a child to continue receiving life-changing therapy. A new donor partnership can keep a special-needs classroom open for another year. A sustainability initiative can ensure that abandoned infants continue receiving care, nutri-

tion, and protection. In essence, stronger institutions create stronger futures.

The transformation witnessed across these institutions demonstrates that sustainable resource mobilization is not merely about raising funds. It is about protecting opportunities, preserving dignity, and ensuring that vulnerable children continue to receive the care and support they need to reach their full potential.

As Scripture reminds us, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5).

Ultimately, the story of these Catholic institutions is not about budgets, projects, or fundraising strategies. It is about children whose futures are being safeguarded by people who refuse to give up on them.

When institutions are strengthened, hope is strengthened. When hope is strengthened, lives are transformed. And when lives are transformed, God’s love becomes visible in the world.



Story of Hope

From Hope to Action; Inspired by St. Francis to Respond to the Cry of the Poor



Mr. Simon Peter Mukasa, lay Franciscan pose for a memorial photo with the statue of St. Francis at Nsambya Parish during the week of *Laudato si* Prayer. Photo by ARU.

By Benedict Mukoni and Immaculate Tusingwire, MMS

The theme for this year's *Laudato Si* Week which took place in May is: "From Hope to Action". Reflecting on this theme, Simon Peter Mukasa, a Lay Franciscan and *Laudato Si* Animator, recalled his journey of the past 4 years. A story marked by faith, courage, hope, loss and an unwavering commitment to serving the most vulnerable.

Simon's Journey of Faith

Born and raised in a Muslim family, Simon's life took an unexpected turn when he encountered a Catholic whose witness of faith deep-

ly touched him. Inspired not by words but by deeds, he embraced the Catholic faith. Yet this decision came at a great personal cost.

At a time when he most needed the support of his family, as he prepared for marriage and the next chapter of his life, Simon faced rejection from his family for converting to Catholic faith. His mother challenged him to choose between her and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The choice was painful, but he still chose his new path. Though reconciliation would come later with some family members, the separation left deep wounds!

Simon's Encounter with St. Francis

of Assisi: A beacon of Inspiration and deeper faith

In the midst of his pain, a friend offered him a small book for consolation, 'the life of St. Francis of Assisi'. As Simon read about the saint who had also been rejected by his wealthy family for choosing a life of faith and service, he found a reflection of his own struggles. That very night, inspired by the saint's witness, he began writing a film script entitled: "Lady Poverty, capturing the radical love and simplicity that characterized the life of St. Francis".

Embracing a Franciscan Calling; a redirected Dream

Soon after knowing St. Francis, Simon encountered the Franciscan Sisters, who were seeking collaborators in their community ministry. What seemed like a simple opportunity became the beginning of a profound calling. Through their accompaniment, he embraced his vocation as a Lay Franciscan and later became a *Laudato Si* Animator, committed to responding to both the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth.

Today, Simon is a husband and father of two children. Yet his greatest legacy may be found far beyond the walls of his own home.

Like many parents, Simon once dreamed of owning land in his ancestral village. Year after year, he saved diligently, setting aside money little by little toward that goal. But God had prepared a different purpose for those savings.

Living and working among vulnerable families in the informal settlement of Nsambya, Simon witnessed the daily struggles of single mothers trying to support their children. Inspired by the vision of Laudato Si, he began organizing a savings group where women could pool resources and build financial resilience. Every Tuesday, they gathered to save what little they could from their modest earnings.

At the same time, Simon introduced an environmental initiative that transformed organic waste into fuel briquettes. What began as a simple ecological project soon became a source of livelihood for struggling households while helping to keep the community cleaner and healthier.

As the mothers' lives slowly improved, another challenge became impossible to ignore since many of their children remained excluded from education.

School fees were beyond the reach of many families. Some of them

refugee children who had fled from conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan faced even greater obstacles. Children living with disabilities and special learning needs were often overlooked altogether, finding few schools willing or prepared to welcome them.

Simon searched tirelessly for solutions. He approached government schools, seeking bursaries and opportunities for the children. Yet despite his efforts, doors remained closed.

Rather than accepting defeat, he asked himself a different question:

"What if we created the opportunity ourselves?" The answer would require extraordinary sacrifice.

"I approached a friend who had an unused space, and I asked if I could use it. She agreed to lease it to me at a subsidized cost. I called a community meeting with local leaders, shared my vision and they embraced and owned it. With no other funding, I withdrew the money I had saved to buy my own homeland and used it to start the school."

What began as an act of faith has become a beacon of hope.

Today, the school serves 135 chil-

dren, including refugees and learners with special needs. New admissions have temporarily been suspended due to limited space. Qualified teachers have been recruited and receive regular salaries, ensuring that every child receives the support and education they deserve.

Now in its second academic term, for the children who attend, the school is more than a place of learning. It is a place of belonging. A place where difference is welcomed, where poverty is not a barrier to opportunity, and where every child is reminded of their God-given dignity and potential.

Simon's story reminds us that the spirit of St. Francis and the message of Laudato Si are not merely ideals to be admired; they are invitations to act. When we open our hearts to the cry of the poor and respond with courage and compassion, hope takes root and grows far beyond anything we could have imagined.

As the school continues to grow, the mission remains open to all people of goodwill who wish to support this life-changing work, Simon's journey beautifully demonstrates faith in action, total trust in God and that when we answer the cry of the poor, we create hope that lasts for generations.



Simon with the Nsambya Laudato Si community during the Laudato Si Week Prayer